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REVIEW

OF A

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE,

TO WHOM WAS REFERRED THE SEVERAL PETITIONS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

MAILS ON THE SABBATH,

PRESENTED TO THE

Senate of the United States,

JANUARY 16, 1829,

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BY THE HON. MR. JOHNSON, OF KENTUCKY,

CHAIRMAN OF SAID COMMITTEE.

1829.



REVIEW.

By the title and design of our work ; by the memory of those who fled from Holland to Plymouth, because in that land of merchandise they could not enjoy a quiet Sabbath, or accustom their children to keep it holy ; by all the blessings, civil and religious, which exist in close alliance with that day, which have been our birthright, and are the just inheritance of the future generations of our children ; and by all our obligations, as patriots to our country, and as Christians to our God, we consider ourselves called upon to animadvert upon the facts, principles and reasonings contained in this Report.

We cherish an ardent attachment to the principles of our republican institutions, and believe that, in alliance with the Gospel, they are destined to emancipate the world ; and, without permitting ourselves to participate in the collisions incident to popular elections, we hold ourselves bound, and declare ourselves disposed, to render to the constituted authorities of our nation, from time to time, our prayers, and our cheerful co-operation, in all things which are lawful and right. It is the happiness of our nation, that so extensively the people read and think for themselves ; and the glory of our government, that it is so accessible to the people, and feels with such ease, superceding the necessity of revolution, the slightest movement of the public will. The press, which in Europe is struggling on to liberty amid bristling bayonets, is with us free ; and those accommodations to public sentiment, which there can be secured only by innovation upon ancient usages, are obtained here with all the safety which appertains to public discussion, and a judicious and peaceful legislation. The people have only to ascertain what will be for their good, and they are blessed with a government whose honor and happiness it is to bestow it.

It is both admitted, and by us maintained, that animadversions upon public men and measures, legislative or judicial, should be conducted with candor and respect. But the maxim that no wrong can be done by men in authority, belongs to the monarchy from which our fathers fled, and not to the republic which they instituted. In our animadversions, therefore, upon the Report of this Committee, we both exercise a right, and perform a duty, which belongs to us as citizens and as Christians.

We enter upon this duty without delay, because the principles of

the Report are fraught with too much evil, and the reasonings which recommend them are too specious and coincident with popular inclination, to permit the bane to circulate long without the antidote; it being much easier to prevent the introduction of poison into the body politic, than to expel it when it shall once have obtained a brisk circulation. We are the more constrained to speak, because in our view, the Sabbath is the mainspring of our republican institutions, every one of which, without its moral power, will most assuredly run down; and because, if the tide of profanation, set in motion by governmental example, continues to roll on for fourteen years to come, as it has done for the fourteen which are past, it may be impossible to preserve to the nation the moral blessings of that day. If, with twelve millions of people, the breaking forth, which at first was but a drop, and then a puny stream, has become a flood, sweeping all mounds and landmarks before it, what power shall stay it, when urged on, as in the course of the present century it will be, by a population of thirty, sixty, or even eighty millions. We are sure that the people of this nation would not, by any public act, abolish the Sabbath; and we are equally confident that to all purposes of national morality it will be done, unless a more efficient public sentiment can be arrayed in favor of its preservation. To our apprehension, the question now before Congress and the nation is, *Abolish, or not abolish, the Christian Sabbath.* Of such a decision we dare not, in time or in eternity, meet the result, without having done all which heaven has enabled us to do, to produce a correct decision. Between the cradle and the grave of liberty we take our stand; and to the nation, and to heaven, we here pledge ourselves, never to abandon our post, or to keep silence, till the Sabbath, the palladium of our hopes, is rescued, or the grave has closed upon our country's glory. And these, we have cause to know, are the views and feelings which have waked up the nation, and called forth the united, spontaneous burst of importunity which has flowed in upon Congress.

The question, however, is not to be settled by mere feeling; much less by the *argumentum ad invidiam*, on either side. It is manifest that the people, as yet, do not thoroughly understand the subject, and when they do, we have great confidence that, under God, they will decide right. Before we proceed, therefore, to a particular consideration of the Report, we shall endeavor to afford to our readers the means of forming a correct judgement, in respect to the real and indispensable efficacy of the Sabbath to the maintenance of our civil and religious institutions.

It has been said often by the advocates of a liberal exposition of the fourth command, that 'the Sabbath was made for man.' This is true, but in a sense directly the opposite of that which is intended. The Sabbath was *made* (i. e. it was *instituted and set*

apart by heaven) for the spiritual use and benefit of man. To be made for *man*, denotes its universal necessity and universal and perpetual obligation : for the term *man* is generic, and includes the race, of all ages and nations. The declaration ‘the Sabbath was made for man,’ implies also that it was bestowed as a blessing, and not imposed as a penance—a mitigation, and not an augmentation of the curse, ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth.’ The six days were made for man as really as the seventh ; but they are appropriated to labor, while the seventh is given as a season in which to suspend his toils and cares, and furnishes to the laboring classes of the world almost their only opportunity for intellectual and moral cultivation. Thus, it is said, at the close of creation, that God blessed and *sanctified* the Sabbath. But to sanctify times, places, and things, is, according to scriptural usage, to set them apart from a secular to a religious use ; as the sons of Levi were sanctified to the priesthood, and the tabernacle and temple to the worship of God, and all their utensils to religious uses.

The necessity of some respite from the ordinary vocations of life the Report admits to be the “voice of universal nature ;” and the wisdom and benevolence of consecrating a seventh part of time to this rest, appear in its experimental adaptation to the physical, intellectual and moral necessities of man. Experience has ascertained that the frames of men and animals are incapable of uninterrupted action. Beside the repose of the night, a periodical rest of the Sabbath is demanded. Those who labor through the summer, without intermission, accomplish less, with much greater exhaustion, than those who observe the Sabbath. Extended journies are performed with more expedition, and less fatigue, by man and beast, with, than without, the rest of the Sabbath. It was ascertained in France, by experiment, that the labor of nine days, instead of six, increased the exhaustion of man, and diminished the aggregate amount of labor. The reason is obvious. No device of man can make a pound weigh more than a pound, or limited strength endure but a limited degree of action ; and he who made the frame of man prepared it to sustain healthful action six days in the week, and no more.

It is manifest, that the mind has its limits of vigorous and healthful application to study, or to business, and that all taxation beyond the exigencies of six days reacts, in nervous prostration, mental aberration, or mortality. God has set the bounds to muscular and mental effort which they cannot pass ; and though man, impatient of constraint, has rushed upon them, and sought to pass, like the waves dashing upon the iron-bound shore, he alone has been broken, while the ordinances of heaven have ‘maintained their place’.

It is chiefly, however, in a moral respect that the Sabbath was

made for man. For all experience has shown that cessation from labor, without religious and moral instruction, results in dissipation and excess, more injurious to mind and body, than unintermitted toil. The Sabbath, as a mere holiday, has always exerted a most terrific demoralizing influence ; and there is no alternative for man, but to keep it holy, or waste away by the toil or the dissipation of its violation.

That man is a free agent, to be governed by law, and not by force, is a matter of universal consciousness. That the moral law contained in the decalogue is the rule of duty, and would, if obeyed, constitute perfect society, is admitted by Christians. The entire influence of this law depends however on its being known, explained, and pressed earnestly and often upon the attention of men. It is the design of the Sabbath to give omnipresence and energy to the moral law, by convening, one day in seven, the population of the world to hear the expositions of its precepts and sanctions. It is not to be denied, also, that man is a sinner, and must be reclaimed and pardoned, to fit him for heaven ; and the Sabbath is given to him as a day of rest, in which he may attend to such instructions as God has provided to make him wise unto salvation. But the influence of both law and Gospel to benefit man for time or for eternity is impaired, just in proportion as the Sabbath is diverted from sacred, and is devoted to secular uses. To establish this position, nothing is necessary, but a concise consideration of the state of human society in respect to each command of the decalogue, where the Sabbath does not give presence and influence to the law of God and the precepts of the Gospel. We will name the commands in order, and illustrate, by an appeal to facts, the state of society in respect to each, where the Sabbath does not impart its energy to the moral law.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." But unblessed by the Sabbath, there is not a spot on earth, where the understanding is enlightened by just conceptions of the character of God, or his worship maintained, or the hearts and lives of men purified by the Gospel. Everywhere, as the Sabbath has disappeared, has darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people ; and though we exult in our liberties and superior illumination, in one century, without the Sabbath, would our sun go down, and all our civil and religious institutions perish.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." But where has the Sabbath departed, and idolatry not entered ? The reluctance of man to retain God in his knowledge is notorious. It is only by the evidence of miracles, and the energy imparted by the Sabbath to divine institutions, that the name and worship of God have been maintained upon the earth. The Jews, previous to their captivity at Babylon, were strangely addicted to the worship of idols ; but after their return, when the synagogue wor-

ship was established, the Sabbath more strictly observed, and the law of God read and explained every recurring seventh day, they never again relapsed into idolatry.

The Sabbath is the wall of partition between Christian and heathen lands ;—the sun which enlightens the one, while all without is the region of the shadow of death. The enemies of revelation revile the Sabbath, as a day subservient to superstition and the clergy ; but let them turn their backs on its hated light, and go where its glimmerings do not reach, and everywhere they will witness the ignorance of the multitude, and the uncontrolled despotism of an idol priesthood. Idolatry has retreated before the hated light of holy time, and now lies in ambush, waiting to return, whenever it shall be extinguished. The enemies of revelation and the Sabbath are in fact the pioneers of idolatry, with all its abominable superstitions, impurities, and blood.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” The entire influence of the divine government depends on the reverence and love for God which prevail among his subjects. Wherever respect for God declines—wherever his name, attributes, word, and worship, are treated with irreverence and levity, there the obedience of the heart has no place, and atheism itself could scarcely be more licentious in its results. Profaneness is ever associated in some form, and more commonly in many forms, with immorality ; so that universally, the more profaneness abounds, the more dissolute is the community in which it prevails. But among what classes of the community does the profanation of the name of God most abound ? Never among those, as a class, who are reverential and strict in their observance of the Sabbath, but among those, almost exclusively, who lightly esteem and violate that holy day.

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” But what is the treatment of parents by their children, where no Sabbath preserves natural affection, corroborates parental by divine authority, invigorates conscience, and forms a public sentiment which renders filial ingratitude disreputable ? In lands nominally Christian, children who are farthest removed from the influence of the Sabbath, are most frequently irreligious, self-willed, ‘heady, highminded, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful ;’ while often, by their abusive conduct, they destroy domestic peace, and by their vices and crimes bring themselves and the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave. In pagan lands, the insubordination of children to parents is notorious, and the affections and comforts of the family state, as they are enjoyed in Christian lands, are scarcely known. It is a common event for children, when their parents have become old, and can be of no further use to them, to carry them forth as a nuisance, and lay them down under the canopy of heaven, by the

river, or the way side, to die the lingering, intolerable death of starvation.

"Thou shalt not kill." But where the Sabbath does not give presence and energy to the moral law, how cheap and insecure is the life of man? Duelling, as a general fact, prevails among Sabbath breakers. It is doubtful whether an individual can be found, of the multitude who have fought, who was accustomed to pay a strict regard to holy time. And where do those assaults most abound, which indicate the absence of principle, and the predominance of intemperance, and rage, and brutal force? Precisely where the Sabbath is least revered, and the tavern has supplanted the sanctuary of God. Where, with horrid frequency, and more horrid impunity, do those assassinations multiply, which hold life in jeopardy? It is where the Sabbath, if known at all, exists in name only, as a day of superstitious forms, and is, in fact, a holiday, more destructive to morals than the other six. In many such places, the work of assassination has become a profession. For a small sum, a desperado can be hired to take away life, and can find a sanctuary from justice in the church; and, for a small portion of his gain, can be absolved from guilt by the ghostly priesthood.

There is a city in our own land, in which, a few years since, an appalling number of assassinations took place in six months, and every one of them with entire impunity. But there was no Sabbath there, which gave presence and influence to the government of God, or tone to public sentiment, or energy to the civil law. And whoever reads the account of assassinations and murders which are fast becoming a part of our weekly intelligence, and observes the geographical location of these deeds of blood, will perceive that they abound chiefly in the twilight of religious knowledge, and where the Sabbath sheds upon the population but a faint and glimmering light. In most unevangelized nations, infanticide is common, and often prevails to such an extent that one half the children born are destroyed, and not unfrequently by the hand of her who bore them. In nearly all heathen nations human sacrifices been offered, and in many are offered still; and in all, the life of man is set at naught with an inhumanity unparalleled even in the worst parts of nominal Christendom. In India, every year, multitudes of widows burn on the funeral pile with their dead husbands. It is said, indeed, to be done voluntarily; but it is a compulsory choice—the disgrace and persecution for a refusal being more dreadful than death. In Rome, thousands were sometimes murdered in a month, in the shows of the gladiators, merely for the public amusement. But no Sabbath had brought to their ears the divine prohibition, *'Thou shalt not kill.'* Until the light of the Sabbath arose on that dark empire, a vast proportion of the population were slaves, over whom the master held the power of life

and death, and whom, in passion or caprice, he often killed and cast into fish ponds, to fatten the fish of his table.

Buchanan, in his *Christian Researches*, writes thus :

“Buddruck, May 30, 1806. We know that we are approaching Juggernaut, (and yet we are more than fifty miles from it) by the human bones which we have seen for some days strewed by the way. Near the pilgrim’s caravansera, there are more than a hundred skulls. The dogs, jackalls and vultures seem to live here on human prey. The vultures exhibit a shocking tameness. This Buddruck is a horrid place. Wherever I turn my eyes, I meet death in some shape or other.”

“Juggernaut, June 14. I have seen Juggernaut. The scene at Buddruck is but the vestibule. No record of ancient or modern history, can give an adequate idea of this valley of death. The idol of Juggernaut has been considered as the Moloch of the present age, and he is justly so named ; for the sacrifices offered up to him by self-devotement are not less criminal, perhaps not less numerous, than those recorded of the Moloch of Canaan.” “I beheld another distressing scene this morning. A poor woman lying dead, or nearly dead, and her two children by her, looking at the dogs and vultures which were near. The people passed without noticing the children. I asked them where was their home? They said, ‘they had no home but where their mother was.’ O, there is no pity at Juggernaut, no mercy, no tenderness of heart in Moloch’s kingdom ;”—and he might have said, *because there is no Sabbath there.*

When the Sabbath was abolished in France, the Mighty God, whose being they had denied, and whose worship they abolished, stood aloof, and gave them up ; and a scene of proscription, and assassination, and desolation ensued, unparalleled in the annals of the civilized world. In the city of Paris, there were in 1803, eight hundred and seven suicides and murders. Among the criminals executed, there were seven fathers who had poisoned their children, ten husbands who had murdered their wives, six wives who had poisoned their husbands, and fifteen children who had destroyed their parents.

“*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” But in many nations lying without the pale of Christendom, promiscuous concubinage has prevailed to the annihilation of domestic purity, and all the sweet charities of the family state. At the Sandwich Islands, licentiousness and disease were fast exterminating the wretched population, until the Sabbath and the glad tidings of the Gospel came to their aid. The impurities of heathenism cannot be named—cannot be even conceived. Buchanan, who witnessed the walls and gates of the temple of Juggernaut “covered with indecent emblems in massive and durable sculpture,” and listened to the obscene stanzas which the priest said “are the delight of the god,” beheld the “lascivious

gesture," and "indecent action," and heard from the multitude "the sensual yell of delight," as they urged the car along, says, "I was appalled at the magnitude and horror of the spectacle, and felt a consciousness of doing wrong in witnessing it, and was about to withdraw ; but a scene of a different kind was now to be presented. The characteristics of Moloch's worship are lust and blood. We have seen the former; now comes the blood." "This, thought I, is the worship of the Bramins of Hindostan, in its sublimest degree! What then shall we think of their private manners and their moral principles : for it is equally true of India, as of Europe, if you would know the state of the people, you must look at the state of the temple."

Why should we allude here to the temple of Venus, and the similar abominations which pertained to her worship ; or to the chastity of nations, a part of whose religion consisted in the most shameless obscenities? *But there was no Sabbath there.*

"*Thou shalt not steal.*" It is notorious, however, that the unevangelized population of the world, with little exception, is addicted to theft. By the laws of some of the ancient heathen nations, stealing was encouraged, if not expressly enjoined. And among modern heathens, as missionaries and other travellers have constantly witnessed, this vice almost universally prevails. And from what class of society in Christian nations, does the anti-social conspiracy of swindlers, thieves, and robbers usually proceed? Beyond question, they are those whom in childhood no parental instruction and example taught to remember the Sabbath day—the vagrants of our cities and land, to whom the returning Sabbath brought leisure and opportunity to perfect themselves, by practice, in all manner of wickedness.

"*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*" But in Hindostan, Sir William Jones, who adorned alike religion, literature, and the bench, declares, that he "never knew a Hindoo, whose testimony under oath could be fully relied on." "They will swear falsely," says Mr. Ward, "in the most shocking manner, so that a judge never knows when he may safely believe a Hindoo witness. Some of the courts of justice are infested by a set of men who, for a paltry sum, are willing to make oath to any fact, however false."

The facility with which forged papers and false testimony can be obtained in most Catholic countries, is well known to commercial men. And in our own land, as we recede from the sanctuary and the Sabbath to those classes of society, whose inclination or employment carry them beyond its illumination and blessed attraction, we shall find the sanctity of an oath to decline, and life and property, as protected by law, to be more and more insecure.

"*Thou shalt not covet.*" "The Hindoos," says Mr. Ward, "are excessively addicted to covetousness, especially in the great

towns, where they have been corrupted by commerce." And where, except in Christian lands, do *governments* exist, which are not rapacious? The rapacity of the Turkish government has well nigh depopulated some of the fairest portions of the earth, once the most populous, where no crime is more dangerous to life than that of being rich. And where will you look for confirmation of the inspired declaration, that 'the world lusteth to envy,' and for mobs and insurrections, laying rapacious hands on the property of the rich, but among those whom the Sabbath has not visited, and whose only restraint is the coercion of law? Men of wealth, who are hasting to be rich by Sabbath day earnings, should understand that their wealth is floating on a popular sea whose waves the laws cannot chain, when the Sabbath has ceased to legislate in the name of heaven—that a volcano is beneath them, whose explosion man cannot prevent or withstand, when the fear of the Lord has ceased, which is the beginning of wisdom. If our men of wealth desire the scenes of revolutionary France to be acted over, let them obliterate the Sabbath, and propagate infidelity, and 'from the vasty deep,' call up the demons of blood—and they will come.

Volumes of facts, under each of these particulars, might easily be accumulated. We have selected a few only as specimens, but enough to show, that the moral law, without the Sabbath, is as imbecile to restrain and bless mankind, as would be the constitution and statutes of our government, without an administration.

From the moral efficacy of the Sabbath, as illustrated by facts, we are authorized to infer the universality and perpetuity of its obligations. It is one of the ten commands, which epitomize the whole duty of man to God, and to his neighbor;—the practical expression, in worship and relative duties, of that love which is called 'the fulfilling of the law.' It was 'made' or instituted for man 'in the beginning.' It might just as well be pretended that the world was not created, as that the Sabbath was not instituted, till the time of Moses. And it is no more an appendage of Judaism, than is the worship of God, or the love of our neighbor. It is, in its nature, (the particular day only in the seven excepted) a moral and not a positive institution. It results from the nature of God that he should be worshipped; and from the nature of man, that he should one day in seven enjoy rest, and pay to God his adoration, and be instructed in his duty. There is in the constitution of the human mind and body, and in the nature of God's moral government, as real, as universal, and as permanent a necessity for the Sabbath, as there is for marriage, obedience to parents, or for truth and moral honesty. Nay, the fourth command is more important than either of the nine, as it is that alone which secures to the government of God an effectual administration.

The change of the day from the seventh to the first, (of which we cannot now speak) no more abolishes the obligation to keep

holy a seventh part of time, than it changes the nature of God or man. To God worship is still due, and man needs instruction and rest one day in seven. All the reasons, therefore, which ever existed for the institution of the Sabbath, exist still, and will forever exist, while the character of God, and the capacity and character of man remain.

Were it admitted, as some Christians insist, that the obligation to keep the Sabbath is not derived from the fourth command, but from its manifest and acknowledged utility, still, it must be agreed, that the Sabbath is, as a matter of *duty*, to be set apart from secular to religious purposes ; for unquestioned utility indicates the will of heaven, and creates moral obligation. The known use of the Sabbath, and the mischiefs of its profanation, afford evidence of the divine will, which every man would be bound in conscience to regard, though no express institution appeared upon the record. God has not defined, by express precept, the kind of garments we shall wear summer and winter ; but it would be suicide to expose the body in the habiliments of summer, to the storms of winter. But it is no more credible that an institution so powerful and salutary in the moral world as the Sabbath, rose up by chance, or at human bidding, than that the sun itself sprung into existence, and continues its course, in obedience to human volition.

It is equally manifest in what manner the Sabbath must be sanctified, to answer, in society, the benevolent end of its institution. It must be so kept, that the physical rest which universal nature demands may be enjoyed ; that the worship which is due to God may be rendered by all, and the instruction which all need, to make them good citizens in time, and fellow citizens of the saints in heaven, may be obtained. All plans, individual or national, which interfere with the universal rest and moral instruction of the Sabbath, except as cases of real necessity shall indicate, do, in proportion to the extent of the violation, contravene the wisdom and goodness of God in bestowing the Sabbath upon man. There are many, who eulogize the Sabbath, and would deprecate its universal violation, who seem to think it may well be kept by proxy—the few for the many. But the community at large may as well eat by proxy, the few for the many, as to obtain rest, or intellectual and moral culture by proxy. The Sabbath exerts its benign power on those only who keep it ; and in proportion to the extent of its violation, are men robbed of the rest which God has given them, and deprived of all the good influences of his moral government.

It will appear also from the preceding facts and reasonings, that violations of the moral law are proper subjects of legislative prohibition and punishment, whether they invade directly, or only indirectly, the rights of man. The blasphemer may not himself be a thief ; but his blasphemy, so far as it produces its legitimate

effect, breaks down the moral government of God, emancipates men from his fear, and lets them loose, urged on by furious passion, to prey upon society. The drunkard may not be himself dishonest ; but by the neglect of relative duty, and the contagion of his bad example, he sows far and wide around him the seeds of irreligion and dishonesty. The adulterer may, in his commercial intercourse, be a man of his word, and in the duelling world a man of honor ; but he scatters in the community firebrands, arrows and death, and sets on fire the course of nature, as if it were set on fire of hell. The Sabbath breaker may not be in all respects an immoral man ; but by his example, and by his influence when he employs others to violate the Sabbath, he prostrates, as far as his influence extends, the moral government of God, and lets men loose to war upon their own souls, and upon one another, and upon the State, as depravity, unrestrained by the fear of God, and stimulated by temptation, may urge them on. Is it proper then to punish the incendiary ; and shall he escape who made him such, and laid the train to which he only applies the spark ? Shall the sword of justice sleep, while the dagger is brandished, and the poison is preparing, and smite only when the work of desolation is done ? Shall the enemy be met only when he has planted his foot on the soil of freedom, and no opposition be made to his landing ?

All Christian nations have considered it lawful to protect the Sabbath from secular violation, as the means of self-preservation and civil prosperity. Most or all of the American colonies did this from the beginning ; we believe all the thirteen States enacted laws prohibiting the appropriation of the Sabbath to secular concerns ; and nearly every State which is a member of the social compact now, has done the same. It is not without astonishment, therefore, that we behold the principle advanced, that government has no right to make the moral law the rule of legislation, because it would imply a legislative exposition of its precepts, and settle theological disputes. This we believe is a new maxim, wholly original, never conceived or uttered before in a Christian legislature ; a position which can be sustained only upon the supposition that there is no God, or no national accountability to God. Is it true, that the government of a Christian people, under all the immense responsibilities of legislation, must move on blindfold to the light from heaven ? Why then do Congress prescribe oaths, from the chief magistrate, to the lowest office in the custom house, or post office department ? And how many disputed questions do they thus settle by legislation,—deciding against the atheist, that there is a God ; against the fatalist, that man is a free agent and accountable ; against the deist, that the soul is immortal ; while they settle the much contested question of future punishment—‘so help me God’ being understood to mean, ‘may God deal with me in the world to come, as my testimony shall be true or false.’ The punishment for piracy or murder,

expounds the sixth command, and decides the agitated question, that the taking of life for national security is lawful, which more persons disbelieve than there are Jews and Sabbatarians in the land. The appointment of chaplains in Congress, seems to be a legislative decision against the Jew, that Jesus is the Messiah, and the Christian religion true. And why do Congress adjourn over the Sabbath, and why are all the courts, and heads of department, and custom houses, and navy yards closed? Ought not all these to be opened, to avoid such a seeming exposition of the fourth command, such a trampling on the conscience of the Jew, and such a sanctioning of "the principle of all the religious persecutions, with which almost every page of modern history is stained?"

What if the national government, instead of practising economy by the violation of the fourth command, had authorized the violation of the seventh, by licencing, as they do in Europe, houses of pollution; and national shame and conscience had poured in these petitions, that the nation might be released from such infamy and crime? The honorable Committee, in reply, would need to change scarce a letter of their Report. 'We are aware,' they might say, 'that a variety of sentiment exists in this nation on the subject of the seventh command, and the obligations of chastity. The petitioners seem to take it for granted, that the practice complained of is a violation of the law of God. But a large and respectable class of men (and women also) believe the Bible to be a cunningly devised fable, and the seventh command, in particular, to be an invasion of inherent rights, and a war against nature—the result of that artificial and arbitrary state of society which kings and priests have introduced, and which it is the prerogative of reason and philosophy to oppose, till the happy time shall come, when coercive monopolies shall cease, and every man and woman, being fully persuaded in their own minds, will act according to their persuasion.

'With these different views about the seventh command, the Committee are of opinion, that Congress cannot interfere. Should Congress repeal the law, it would imply a legislative decision that the Bible is the word of God—a legislative decision of a theological dispute—an encroachment on natural liberty—an attempt to coerce chastity by national law; all which transcends, obviously, the powers of the government.'

From the views here taken on this subject, we cannot but hope it will seem plain to many, whose minds have been unsettled and perplexed by the Report, that the transportation of the mail and the opening of the post offices on the Sabbath cannot be regarded as a matter of national necessity. To become such, it must be as urgent as the necessity which authorizes individuals to do secular work on the Sabbath. But this, in the case of individuals, must be only occasional, and never systematic and habitual. And it must be, where the great laws of self-preservation, which it is

the object of the Sabbath to sustain, would be subverted. But no such necessity to transport the mail, and open the post offices, presses on the nation, as would constitute a justifiable necessity in the case of individuals,—like that of preparing food, attending the sick, pursuing voyages on the deep, or self-defence in time of war. And as the necessity is not such as would justify individuals, even in the occasional violation of the Sabbath ; much less can it justify the government in extending its stated and habitual violation through the land. Necessity, in the scriptural sense, is not even pretended. All which is claimed is, that the running of the mail is a great convenience, and a great saving in time and money. But may individuals violate the Sabbath stately for convenience, time and money? How then can Congress do it? Can the people invest their government with authority to do that which it is unlawful for themselves to do?

This plea of national necessity is answered also by the consideration, that the post office in London is closed on the Sabbath, and no mail is permitted to leave the city on that day ;—by the fact that, during the early part of our national existence, including a period of unparalleled commercial activity and national prosperity, the post offices of this land were closed, and the mails, but to a very limited extent, did not run on the Lord's day ;—and from the fact that we enjoy now, by the improvement of roads, and the facilities of steam, a more rapid communication of intelligence in five days, than fifteen years ago could have been accomplished in seven. No necessity, therefore, presses us now, which did not press the nation twenty years ago, without the apprehension of creating a necessity for violating the Sabbath ; and every year, the same causes are rendering the plea more and more fallacious and inexcusable. Besides, not half the nation are benefited now by the Sabbath mails. Probably three quarters of the people do not receive their intelligence oftener than twice and thrice in the week. How are these defended against expresses, and commercial speculations? Or is it only for the accommodation of the great cities, that the nation must surrender, to such a fearful extent, the moral energies of the Sabbath? But that even this is not necessary, is apparent from the facts, that many merchants of the first respectability and most extensive business, will not receive their communications on the Sabbath ; and that a large portion of the respectable mercantile community in our cities, have petitioned Congress to close the post offices, and discontinue the running of the mail,—while few, and comparatively feeble, have been the notes of remonstrance.

We are aware it has been said, that if the government should cease to transport the mail, private expresses would be hastened through the land, and that a greater encroachment would be made upon the Sabbath, than is now made ; so that even if it is a sin to

keep up commercial business on the Sabbath, it is much cheaper, on the whole, to have the government sin for the people, than to have the people sin for themselves. But by the same authority we have been told, and we believe it, that it is not the business of the national government to sustain by positive legislation, either the religion or the morals of the nation. It is wholly a political institution. If other men will sin if the government do not sin for them, that is not the fault of the government, and does not expose the people to punishment on their account; and before the government undertake to economize in wickedness for the people, we think the constitution ought to be revised, and an article inserted giving this power. Until this is done, all we ask of Congress is not to impede our efforts to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath; and by the laws of the states, and Sabbath schools, and such other efforts as the honorable gentleman kindly recommends to us, we will endeavor to "*persuade*," not "*coerce*," our countrymen into a unanimous opinion that it is best, for time and for eternity, to remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.

We cannot but admire the admirable dexterity with which the honorable gentleman touches and demolishes, as with magic wand, all his own formidable objections to granting the petitions. 'It cannot be done! Impossible! Jew and Gentile would justly revolt at the odious impartiality. Should there be only half a thousand Jews, we must violate the Sabbath of twelve millions of Christians, to evince our consistency and impartiality.'—How ceasing to violate the Christian Sabbath should alleviate the conscience of the Jew, whose Sabbath will be violated at any rate, we cannot perceive; but so it must be, until the petitioners are disposed of; and then, having escaped from these rocks and quicksands to a smooth and open sea, lo! all at once, there is not the least difficulty in stopping the mail on the first day of the week, if it be only expedient. If a few dollars can be saved to the nation by stopping the mail, why then it can be done; for 'it is the opinion of the Committee that the subject should be regarded simply as a question of expediency, irrespective of its religious bearings. Jew and Christian out of the question, we can grant your petitions without the least difficulty, if it is best.' Be it so, then. The petitioners have not asked that Congress will be induced to stop the mail on the Sabbath for every one of the reasons they have urged; nor would the granting of the petitions imply this. Does the decision of a case in favor of counsel on one side imply the legitimacy of all his arguments? If the honorable gentleman had read the petitions extensively, he would have seen, that they rest their argument as much on the inexpediency, as on the immorality, of encroaching upon the Sabbath, by the transportation of the mails. Indeed, if the transportation of the mail is not a work of necessity, the evidence of its inexpediency is irresistible. Those best acquainted

with muscular strength, admit that, whatever seeming gain may be the result of unintermitted toil, it is more than balanced by the waning powers, and shortened date of animal activity ; and the general law of animal mechanism will, with infallible certainty, cut short the date and the results of human exertion. So far then as national prosperity depends on muscular and mental vigor, six days will produce a greater income than seven ; with cheering rest, and higher health, and better spirits, and social enjoyment, and religious privileges, and peace of conscience, and hopes of heaven. But were the earnings of the Sabbath clear gain, it is too soon to exult, until the sickness and premature mortality occasioned by incessant toil are estimated—the quarrels and law suits, the intemperance, and improvidence, and idleness, the neglect of moral culture in the family, and the peculation and wasteful prodigality which attend the latter end of national dissoluteness. How certainly will all these sacrilegious earnings be swallowed up, and with them double their amount of honest gains, in the vortex of dissipation, which the violation of the Sabbath will not fail to create ; for nothing is so improvident and wasteful as vice. Besides, if the transportation of the mail is not lawful, as a work of necessity, it is criminal, and a great national sin ; and whoever contended with his Maker and prospered ? Does he not hold at his disposal all the sources of national prosperity, and all the engines of national chastisement ? At what instant he speaks, pestilence and war, blast and mildew, may invade us ; the wisdom of the wise may perish ; infatuation fall on our counsels ; and the flames of a furious civil war burst out in the nation. Until we are independent of God, it is madness to trample on his institutions.

But we are told that no great encroachment is made on the Sabbath, and no great evil inflicted, by the transportation of the mail. This is the opinion of the honorable Committee, unsupported by any competent testimony, and in opposition to the express testimony of the thousands of all classes in society, of all religious denominations, and from all parts of the land, who express their deep sense of the *great* evil which is done to the cause of religion and morality, by the transportation of the mail, and the opening of the post offices. Nor are facts in the case wanting which justify their belief. There are twenty-six thousand men employed on the Sabbath, in superintending the transportation and opening of the mail ; many of whom are subjected to the entire loss, and many more to the partial loss, of the privileges of public worship. Those who travel in the mail stages, and those detained from worship for their accommodation, constitute an equal number, who are deprived of the rest and benign influences of the Sabbath. And probably three times the same number of children and servants are in this way denied the instruction and government which their parents and masters are bound to give them on the Sabbath,

and abandoned to their own way, under the powerful influence of a bad example. And is all this a trifle? But to this must be added the innumerable multitude of minds, tossed by restless anxieties, and unblessed by the influence of religious instruction, in consequence of the tide of worldly care and business which the mail of every Sabbath throws upon them. And to conscience we appeal, whether to these entire classes the mail does not counteract and destroy nearly the whole moral influence of the Sabbath day. When political intelligence or letters on business are expected or received, how many thousands absent themselves from the house of God wholly; or with what vacant, vexed, and wandering minds, do they attend? Does not the seed fall among thorns, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, spring up and choke the word? Can the Sabbath exert its benign influence on those, for time or for eternity, through whose minds and hearts the Sabbath mail pours along, without intermission, the turbid stream of worldly care, and on whom it imposes, in some form, and to a great extent, the tax of secular labor? How can the Sabbath be kept, when the entire secular business of the nation is pressed every Sabbath upon the attention of those who are concerned in it? Most of these persons, too, are parents and masters, whose children and servants are again unblessed with that moral supervision which God has provided for them, and left to grow up in darkness, or to borrow light from other altars than their own. Is this wide spread diversion of mind and heart, and this neglect of religious and domestic duties, a small evil? Millions are injured by it, and gradually, but certainly, the moral power of the Sabbath will be destroyed by it.

But as yet we have not named the influence of Sabbath mails and post offices, which is most comprehensively disastrous. We mean the high countenance and sanction, which the example of the government affords, to an entire national sequestration of the Sabbath. Until the mails stretched out their long lines of travel through the nation, public sentiment and law, in many parts of the land, kept back the immoralities of impatient worldliness. But this single practice of running the mail, and opening the post offices on the Sabbath, has been like the letting out of waters,—first the drop—next the stream—and then the yawning breach—till all mounds and landmarks have nearly disappeared before the universal inundation. The laws of the States relative to the Sabbath have become a dead letter, and public sentiment, paralyzed by familiarity, and faint-hearted, has not been heard amid the foam and roar of the surrounding flood; until the precipice at length to which we are hasting appears, and a panic of fear has flashed through the land, while all instinctively lay hold on the Sabbath as the anchor of their hopes. And yet the Committee tell them, while the cataract roars, and cord after cord of the cable is cut, that no harm is done—that

it is good economy, and that Congress, for conscience sake, and the love of liberty and convenience, cannot stop!

In our more particular animadversions on the Report, we regret that truth and equity should require us to say, that the petitioners are misapprehended, and, though we trust unintentionally, yet really and grossly misrepresented. Both the language and the argument of the Report imply, that the petitioners have requested Congress to legislate over the citizens of the nation, to prohibit the violation and enforce the observance of the Sabbath, by the penalties of law. And the reply is, 'it would interfere with the rights of the Jew; oblige Congress to turn expositors of the ten commandments, and settle by legislation a theological controversy; would be like the Jewish theocracy, to enforce religious observances; introduce religious coercion in our civil institutions; innovate upon the religious rights of the citizens; incorporate the observance of a holy day in our land; and we might as well provide edifices and support the ministry;—that there is no way to avoid these evils, but to regard Congress as a civil institution, wholly destitute of religious authority; and that our constitution regards no other power than that of persuasion for enforcing religious observances.'

By all this variety of phraseology and argument, are the petitioners held up to odium before the nation, as having petitioned Congress to compel the people of the United States, by law, to observe the first day of the week. Those who approve of the Report, understand it thus, and seek to turn upon the petitioners the odium of such a request. But have the petitioners made any such request? NEVER. We challenge the honorable gentleman who presented the Report to produce a single petition from the multitude, which asks that Congress will by law compel the people of the United States to observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath, or to observe any day. We admit, and the petitioners well knew, that Congress have no power to do this, not because it would imply an exposition of the moral law, or the settlement of a religious controversy; but the Sabbath, with many other subjects of legislation, is reserved to the States, as independent republics; while to Congress is confided such matters of general policy, domestic and foreign, as result from the relations of the States to one another and to the government, and from our national character and relations. Congress have no more authority to prohibit and punish theft and adultery, than Sabbath breaking; no more authority to protect the life, reputation and property of the citizens of the United States, except it be on the high seas, than to protect the Sabbath; no more right to build court houses and jails, and appoint courts and sheriffs for the different counties, than to build temples and support ministers. On all these subjects, it is the province of the States to legislate; and on all these subjects the States have legislated from their colonial infancy to this day, without dreaming of any of the horrible consequences portrayed in the

Report, and without encroachment on the conscience either of Sabbatarian or Jew, who have been permitted to be fully persuaded in their own minds, and rest on which day of the seven they pleased.

Will it then be demanded, what have the petitioners prayed for? Self-respect and public justice required the Committee to have ascertained this, before with such needless haste and injurious misrepresentation they made their Report. The petitioners ask that Congress will cause its own agents of the post office department, over whom it possesses the entire power of legislation, to pay the same respect to the Sabbath, which Congress itself, by its adjournment, pays to it, and which the national courts, and other heads of departments, and the custom houses of the nation, pay to it; and they request Congress to do this by legislation, because they have by legislation required and sanctioned the anomaly of disregard to the Sabbath in the post office department.

The Committee are mistaken in saying that Congress have never legislated on this subject. From an early date, the mail has run on the Sabbath on some routes; and repeatedly have Congress, when petitioned on the subject, refused to give directions to the Post Master General to the contrary. And in 1825, a law was enacted, requiring every post master in the land to deliver letters and packages on every day of the week, at all seasonable hours. The refusal to direct the Post Master General to discontinue the transportation of mails on the Sabbath, and this law compelling all the post offices of the nation to be open on the Sabbath, is a legislative confirmation of the practice. So the Post Master General justly considers the subject. "The result of these applications," he says, "has given a sanction to the policy of the department, which I have considered as controlling any discretion the Post Master General might be inclined to exercise on the subject. He cannot act on the moral principle, unless he extend it to every mail in the nation. This would involve a responsibility which no individual can exercise with impunity, and would be in opposition to the implied sanction of the national legislature."

The petitioners ask that Congress will cease to enforce, by law, what they (the petitioners) deem a violation of the Sabbath; that they will give to the Post Master General a legislative sanction for the *discontinuance* of the Sabbath mails, as unequivocal as that by which they have foreclosed his discretion, and made it his duty to continue them. They ask Congress, by its public agents, to respect the Sabbath in the Post Office department, as it is respected in all other departments of the government. And they are gravely told that Congress cannot expound the ten commands, cannot settle theological disputes, cannot invade the conscience of the Jew, cannot introduce religious observances into our institutions, cannot coerce the observance of the Sabbath, cannot preclude the discretion of the people to think for themselves, cannot sanction a

principle of persecution which has stained almost every page of history ; and they might have added with just as much relevancy, and with as little insult to the petitioners, cannot sustain a crusade to rescue the holy sepulchre from infidels, or make a pilgrimage to Mecca in honor of Mahomet, or send an embassy to explore the concavity of the North Pole.

Nor is misrepresentation the full measure of retribution with which the petitioners are visited. It is insinuated that they are a combination to change the government from a civil to a religious institution. To make such an attempt would be treason, and the punishment of treason is death. But what have the petitioners done ? Have they met in midnight conclave, or in tumultuous assemblies, or assailed the government with the language of authority or menace ? What unlawful word have they spoken ? What unlawful act have they done ? Have not religious persons the same right as others to petition Congress ? And when they have done so, are they to be denounced before the nation as a treasonable combination to change the government—as taking the first step, and entering the opening wedge of revolution ? And yet the conspirators are many of them such men that, if they are false, where shall we look for integrity ; or if they are deceived, for talent and wisdom ? They approach the government, not for personal emolument, but as patriots and Christians, to express their high sense of the moral energy and necessity of the Sabbath for the perpetuity of our republican institutions, and respectfully to request that the government will not, by legislation, impair those energies. And by implication they are charged with crimes which, were they real, would subject them to the halter !

There has been no combination, and is none, but what is produced by the concurrent feeling of grief and alarm among wise and good men, at beholding the influence of the Sabbath impaired, by a conspicuous and all pervading governmental sanction. And no means have been resorted to, but such as the Constitution guarantees, the nature of the case demands, and all men adopt on other subjects to bring out an expression of public sentiment.

The Report moreover denies to Christians the exercise of their civil rights. The right of petitioning is guaranteed to all citizens alike. But the object of petitioning is, by a statement of facts and arguments, and the exhibition of public sentiment, to *influence* the government ; and this the Report implies all persons may do, but religious persons. Should they, alarmed by any supposed encroachment upon the religious or moral interests of the community, venture to petition, they must be rejected,—for the prevention of a religious despotism, and **THE PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY !** Alas ! where is religious liberty now, if Christians may not petition Congress !

We admit that Christians, as such, ought not to attempt to in-

fluence the administration in things merely secular, beyond the unobtrusive influence of their silent suffrage ; and ought not to become political partisans, heated and agitated by all the little and great disputes which must ever attend popular governments ; and ought never to attempt, or be permitted, to make the government a religious instead of a civil institution. But it is not a civil, but a moral effect for which the petitioners ask, and one in their view indispensable to the perpetuity of our republican institutions. Nor do they request Congress to do anything by positive legislation to support or even to protect the Sabbath. To the laws of the States, and to moral influence and public sentiment they look for this. It is their desire to ‘recommend religion by deeds of benevolence, by Christian meekness, by lives of temperance and holiness, by combining their efforts to instruct the ignorant, to relieve the widow and the orphan, and to promulgate to the world the Gospel of their Saviour ;’ and they only request that Congress will not obstruct them in their work, by impairing the moral energy of the Sabbath, on which, under God, all their success depends ;—and they are told about religious combinations to effect a political object, and the danger of a religious despotism !

Is the maxim settled, then, that the government can do nothing injurious to the interests of republicanism and virtue, or that if they do, religious persons must exert no influence to prevent the evil ? Should infidelity begin to turn the influence of the government against religion, might not the injured petition ? Should Congress war upon national morality by building distilleries all over the land, might not the friends of Religion, beholding their demoralizing influence, petition Congress to discontinue them ? Would this be an unlawful attempt to influence government by a religious combination ? To whom does it more properly appertain than to the religious community, to watch over the interests of morality, and to send into the halls of legislation the voice of respectful, affectionate, but earnest expostulation ?

The Report perverts and misapplies historical facts, in respect to religious usurpations upon the institutions of civil government. The Report reasons as if the facts were, that religious people have been accustomed to seek and to gain an insidious ascendancy over governments ; whereas the facts are, that governments, to augment and perpetuate their power, have usurped the rights of the people. Priests have indeed been the instruments, but they have been hirelings, appointed and supported by the government, and not by the people. There is no instance in the annals of the world, in which ministers, chosen and supported by their people, or churches, in the full and intelligent enjoyment of religious liberty, ever attempted to usurp an ecclesiastical dominion, and introduce a religious despotism. The facts assumed to excite so much odium, and bring so much jealousy upon the religious community of this nation, are

facts that never happened. The truth is, that Christianity, in its doctrines and institutions, is theoretically, experimentally, and practically, republican in its tendency. Despotic governments know this, and have therefore never permitted Christianity to go out among their people in all her simplicity, loveliness, and power. They have corrupted her doctrines, bribed her priesthood, and encumbered her movements by state garments which they have compelled her to wear ; while the history of the church presents a continued effort of good men to throw off these encumbrances, and of government to keep religion in chains. And if we may trust infidel or Christian historians, a great proportion of the civil and religious liberty of the world has resulted from the efforts of the pious to obtain religious liberty. None were more determined advocates of religious liberty, than the Fathers of this land, who broke from the religious establishments of Europe, and by whom, in their colonial state, all the elements of our civil and religious institutions were formed. It was their spirit which burst out in the Revolution, achieved our independence, and breathed itself into our State and national governments. None, in that tremendous conflict of an infant republic with a giant nation, were more influential in rousing the zeal, and sustaining the courage of the people, or made greater sacrifices, than the ministers and their pious hearers. Nor to the present hour has the flame abated. The ministers and churches of this nation do not desire, but would most solemnly deprecate, a union of church and State. Religion does not obliterate intellect, nor blot out memory, nor subvert the judgement, nor inspire ambitious and sinister designs. There is reason, and philosophy, and talent, and learning, and patriotism, and political wisdom, and integrity, among the religious portion of the community. Nor have they done anything to forfeit the confidence, or to justify an attempt to fasten upon them the suspicion, of their fellow citizens. They know, as well as any can teach them, that the alliance of church and State, corrupts religion, and tends to despotism, and have no more desire than others to bequeath degradation and bondage to their posterity. They feel that it is the glory of our nation, that it is not cursed, as other nations have been, with the union of church and State, and the perplexed legislation about forms of worship, and the establishment of creeds ; and so far are they from desiring a national religion in any one denomination, or by the amalgamation of all, that no class of the community would regard such an attempt with more abhorrence, or meet it with a more determined resistance.

Why, then, are the sins of Popery visited upon Protestants, and the sins of despotic governments and national religions visited on the Christians of a republic who abhor them, and who were the providential instruments by which God prepared deliverance, and established at length the fair fabric of our civil and religious

institutions—at once the admiration and the hope of the world? And why do the honorable Committee forget that the last horrible despotism which arose on the ruins of civil and religious liberty, was reared by atheists, who obliterated the Sabbath, and denied accountability, and with the sweet words of liberty and equality on their tongues, waded in blood?

The Report, were it sanctioned by the government, would be an act of real and severe persecution. No device of persecuting governments has been more common to inflame popular resentment, prevent sympathy, and justify cruelty, than to multiply upon good men false accusations and odious epithets, for the conscientious performance of their duty. Jeremiah, for his faithful reproofs was charged with treason and cast into prison; and Jesus was charged with aspiring to the throne of Cæsar. Nero set Rome on fire, and then threw upon Christians the odium of the execrable deed; dressing them up in the skins of wild beasts, and letting out dogs to bark at and devour them. In the pagan and papal persecutions, the most horrible designs and odious crimes were charged upon Christians. Vice and irreligion have always chosen to wrap themselves in the habiliments of virtue, and to throw their own unseemly garments on the victims of their hate. In this nation, the cry of ‘church and State’ has, by certain writers, been rung through all the changes of the octave. But the names and lives of the authors being known, have rendered their efforts harmless. But let these dark and unfounded suspicions, arising from the lakes and fens of infidelity, be embodied and propagated by the government, and a new era opens upon us. This would be indeed the first step, and we trust the last too, of a most injurious governmental persecution;—“the entering wedge of a scheme to make this government” a religious despotism, “instead of a social and political institution.” For of what avail would be a legal equality on paper, and the sweet sounds of liberty playing about our ears, if ambitious and irreligious and worldly men, may set at naught the Sabbath, which all men admit to be indispensable to the perpetuity of republican institutions; and religious men, if they express their fears, and pour out their sorrows, supplications and arguments in the ears of the government, must be repelled with the charge of treasonable combination. It was said of Nabal, that ‘he was such a son of Belial, that a man might not speak unto him;’ and really, it would seem as if some gentlemen imagined that their feet were already upon the necks of the pious, and governmental influence their own by prescription, and that all attempts to persuade a Christian government not to do wrong, were an unhallowed interference with the rights of a wicked man’s conscience. If atheists had petitioned for the preservation of the Sabbath, on account of its good republican tendencies, *they* might have been

treated with decorum ; but for the religious community to petition, *that alters the case.*

Again we ask, of what avail are liberty and equality on paper, and in name, provided such a perversion of public sentiment should be sanctioned by the government itself, as makes the exercise of those rights by Christians a crime, which are so liberally enjoyed by all other classes of the community? This would be a despotism more injurious than unequal rights by constitution : for these, modified by a generous public sentiment, might become a dead letter ; but a perverted public sentiment, which gives to one class of citizens rights, the exercise of which is treasonable combination in another, is a despotism which never sleeps, and is never obsolete,—a despotism whose iron rod would be felt, not around the throne merely, but wherever there is an atheist, or a scoffer, or a profligate, to cry ‘*priestcraft,*’ and an irreligious multitude to echo the cry, and browbeat the pious. Let the people of this nation look to this, and remember, that religious liberty may be destroyed, under the specious pretext of defending it.

The Report concludes by saying, that “the petitioners do not complain of any infringement on their own rights.” But they do : it is their whole and only complaint, that their rights are invaded. They complain that the government should make them partakers in its sins, and in the judgements which, for national sins, God is accustomed to visit both upon the government and the people. They complain that their efforts to train up their children and the rising generation, should be impeded, counteracted, and often defeated, by the floods of irreligion and immorality, which are let out upon them by those increasing violations of the Sabbath, to which the authority and the example of the government is accessary. They complain that their own life, and character, and property, should be rendered more and more insecure by such a fearful perversion of that day, which alone gives energy to the moral government of God, forms a correct public sentiment, and gives efficacy to those civil laws which protect their rights. They complain that conscientious men should be obliged to violate their consciences, or be excluded from employment in one department of the government, thus throwing the entire business of that department, into the hands of men of a lax conscience. They hold that our republican institutions are their birthright, and that neither the citizens, nor the government, may take it from them, by impairing the influence of the Sabbath, on which its perpetuity depends. They are employed, as they have been exhorted to be, in undergirding the ship by moral bonds, not at all aspiring to guide the helm ; and they complain that while they are doing this, the high officers on board should give orders to pull out the caulking, and bore holes in the bottom. They have no desire to go to the bottom, and the government have no right to sink them.

Since most of the preceding was in type, we have been cheered by the Report of the honorable Mr. McKean, chairman of the Committee on post offices and post roads, between which and our own sentiments, we are gratified to perceive so many points of coincidence. It is a lucid, candid, able document. It treats the petitioners with the decorum which every republican government owes to its citizens, who approach it respectfully to petition, and vindicates them from the unfounded aspersions so illiberally cast upon them by the Committee of the Senate. It commences by saying,

“The memorials on this subject, on account of the numerous sources from which they have been received, the number and respectability of the signatures, as well as the intrinsic importance of the question involved, require from the Committee and the Legislature, the most deliberate and respectful consideration. It is believed that the history of legislation in this country affords no instance in which a stronger expression has been made, if regard be had to numbers, the wealth, or the intelligence of the petitioners.”

The Report thus proceeds ;

“The Committee entertain no doubt that the numerous petitioners for the discontinuance of the Sabbath mail, and the delivery of letters from the post offices, have generally acted from pure motives, and with a reference to what they consider the best interest of the country.

“They do not ask Congress to impose certain duties on any portion of citizens, which may interfere with their religious opinions, but to relieve from the performance of such duties.

“The transportation of the mail is a great governmental operation, and the petitioners believe it should be suspended on the Sabbath, and the post offices closed, out of respect to the day, as well as the business of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the government. They did not, probably, consider that greater difficulty could arise in designating the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, for this purpose, than had been incurred in the instances referred to. It is not considered by the Committee, that the petitioners ask the introduction of any new principle into our laws, but the extension of one which has already been recognized. In the policy of the measure desired, the Committee believe the petitioners are mistaken, but they do not consider the attempt made by them, as tending to form the justly odious combination of church and State.”

The Report also in conclusion “earnestly recommends the repeal of so much of the eleventh section of the post office law, of March, 1825, as requires post masters to deliver letters, newspapers, &c., on the Sabbath.”

Though on some points, their Report is adverse to the petitioners, yet, wherever the Committee differ from them, they treat them respectfully, giving facts and arguments, instead of insidious insinuation and unmerited rebuke.

The arguments for continuing the transportation of the mail, are derived wholly from considerations of expediency ;—the convenience and gain of uninterrupted and rapid intelligence, and its necessity to protect the citizens from the evils of speculation. That some convenience and immediate gain may be the result of the constant movement of the mail, and that there may be some evils incident to its discontinuance on the Sabbath, may be ad-

mitted. But so also would there be some immediate gain, should Congress, and the courts, and heads of departments, and custom houses, transact business on the Sabbath ; and there are some evils incident to this general suspension of secular business in all the departments of the government. The merchant also, and the manufacturer, and the mechanic, and farmer, might be able to turn the Sabbath to some immediate good account, and to avoid some evils which attend its observance. But the question is, will these temporary gains balance the permanent loss which will result from a general relaxation of morals, produced by the rapid disappearance of the Sabbath from our land ?

The subject is now fairly before the nation, and it is the most important one on which a free people were ever called to decide. It is, whether the Sabbath, as to all national influence, shall be blotted out, or maintained ; for its name, as a holiday, will be of no avail, when its moral energies shall have ceased.

This is no time for petulance and invective. We are now pre-eminently free and happy, and with absolute certainty, our republican institutions may be made perpetual, by the moral energies of the Sabbath, and not without. But no coercive legislation can preserve it. Unless the nation will awake, and by a spontaneous public sentiment arise for the preservation of the Sabbath, it is gone. For the temptations of the seaboard, and steamboats, and canals, are immense ; far and wide do they put in motion the streams of business ; and as our millions multiply, and the power of habit, and the tide of business shall increase, we may as well attempt to stop the rolling of the ocean, or the currents of our mighty rivers. Now we may perpetuate our republic, upon condition that we will observe the Sabbath ; and the world, and heaven, and hell, are looking on to witness our decision.





